

Commercial Façade Grant Guidelines

The City of Evansville's Commercial Façade Grant (CFG) Program is aimed at revitalizing existing buildings by providing façade grants to businesses and property owners within the eligible census tracts. Local businesses and local property owners are the focus of this grant program; however, the program does not require the owners to be local or the businesses to be unique to Evansville. The census tracts were chosen for this program because of their previously identified challenges for development due to obsolescence, age, building deterioration, and other factors. These areas are also central to and serve many of the city's older, traditional residential neighborhoods. This program was created and will be administered by the Department of Metropolitan Development. The Commercial Façade Grant Program will provide grant funds on a 1:1 ratio (50%) matching basis. The program will accept applications one time per year, from March 15th to April 15th. Preliminary grant awardees will be announced on or around June 1st 2014.

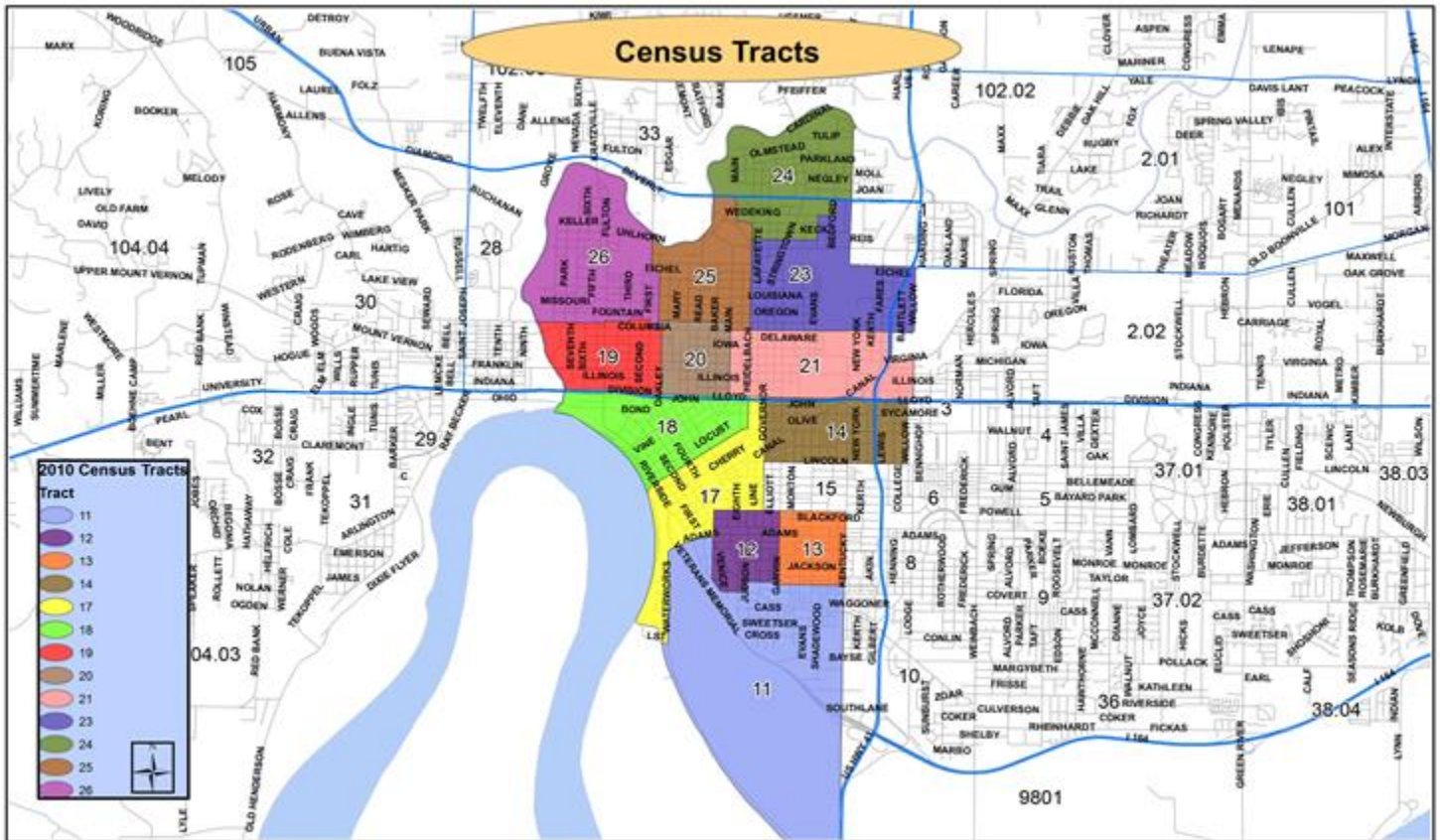
PROGRAM GOALS

- A. Maintain vibrancy of core commercial areas by encouraging investments that enhance the visual aesthetics of commercial properties and lead to increased property values.
- B. Stimulate economic development by providing incentives to increase existing business investment, ensure business sustainability, and create aesthetically pleasing areas that attract new businesses and consumers.
- C. Complement other revitalization efforts to ensure the maximum leverage of resources.
- D. Support local businesses and encourage local entrepreneurship, in order to further enhance the "local flavor" of Evansville.

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PROGRAM BOUNDARIES

All eligible properties must be located within the eligible census tracts; all are referenced in the **Façade Grant Location Map**



PROGRAM PARTICIPATION CRITERIA

- A. Buildings proposed for façade improvements must be located on property within a designated Census Tract as shown.
- B. Buildings proposed for façade improvements must have commercial activity as their primary purpose. Examples include, but are not limited to, retail and specialty stores, services, restaurants, bars, cultural venues, professional offices, commercial retail centers, and historic commercial buildings.
 - Mixed-use buildings are eligible, as long as the first story of the building is predominantly used for commercial activity. The upper stories may include residential dwelling units.
 - Buildings that are solely used for residential purposes are **NOT eligible** for this grant program. Examples of ineligible residential properties include single-family houses, duplexes, apartments, condominiums, assisted living centers, and historic commercial buildings being used solely for residential.

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- Vacant buildings are eligible to apply for this grant program, as long as owners intend to re-activate the building with a predominantly commercial use. Owners must provide proof of tenant agreements if a specific tenant is scheduled to occupy the space. If no tenant is scheduled to occupy the space at the time of application, the owner must provide proof that the property is in habitable condition as defined by the Building Code, or will be made to be in habitable condition via the façade grant project.
 - Not-for-profit organizations are eligible to apply, with uses including but not limited to offices, community centers, retail or wholesale stores, restaurants, entertainment venues, and services.
 - Faith-based or religious organizations or uses are NOT eligible for this grant program if the properties and/or buildings seeking the grant are used for religious activities. Such religious activities include worship, religious instruction, or proselytization. However, if the faith-based organization seeks a grant for a secular use on property not used for religious purposes, then the organization does qualify to apply for a grant.
- C. This grant program focuses on the improvement of existing buildings' facades. Therefore, façade grant funds for new construction can only be used on the existing façade and additional façade (exterior only). Proof of funds being used only for the exterior façade, both existing and new, must be submitted or the city reserves the right to void the grant agreement.
- D. The Commercial Façade Grant is a fifty percent (50%) matching grant program. Grants of up to \$50,000 per year (\$100,000 total project cost) are available to building owners whose buildings house a single business or tenants within those buildings.
- E. Each building on a parcel and each business in a multi-tenant commercial building is allowed to be considered as a separate project and is eligible to apply for its own grant, if so desired. Such buildings and/or businesses do not have to apply for a grant as one entity.
- F. First-time applicants will have priority over previously awarded applicants.
- G. A property that received a Commercial Façade Grant in the past may apply for additional Commercial Façade Grants. However, subsequent applications will be treated cumulatively for purposes of determining funding eligibility. The total amount of cumulative grant funds available under this program will be capped at \$50,000 per project site per five year period.
- H. Applicants must have a signed Grant Agreement with the City of Evansville prior to entering into any contracts, purchasing any grant related materials, or commencing any improvements. Funds spent before the Grant Agreement is signed by both parties are not eligible for reimbursement.
- I. If grant recipients decide to change the project after scope of work and bid sheet approval, they must immediately contact the Grant Administrator in writing for additional project review and written approval before going forward with the changed project scope. There is no guarantee that the changes will be approved. Funding awards cannot be increased after notification of the initial award, unless approved in writing by the Grant Administrator, and only if additional funding is available. If a grant recipient reduces the level of investment, the City retains the right to reduce the grant amount previously approved or deny the grant entirely.

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- J. If the applicant is not the owner of the building, written consent for the submission of the grant application and proposed improvements must be obtained from the legal owner. See the Application Form for details.
- K. Along with the application form, applicants are required to submit a detailed scope of work and a cost estimate of the proposed project. These two documents are vital in determining whether or not the project fits the goals of the CFG program and helps establish the grant amount to award the applicant.
- L. Compliance with any Design Guidelines will be determined by the Facade Design Committee (FDC). The FDC may also make design recommendations not related to compliance with the Design Guidelines.
- M. After receiving a preliminary grant award letter, the applicant will meet with the Facade Design Committee (FDC) to finalize the scope of work and to add appropriate details to then convert the scope of work into a bid sheet. Each applicant will then be required to obtain three (3) bids for work on their façade project, using the approved bid sheet as the basis for all bids.
- N. The approved grant amount will be based on the lowest of the three (3) qualified bids submitted by the applicant. However, an applicant may select a higher bid. If the applicant chooses a higher bid, then the applicant must pay 100% of the cost difference between the chosen bid and the low bid.
- O. All façade improvements must be in compliance with the City of Evansville's Comprehensive Plan, any design guidelines within the census tracts, the Zoning Ordinance, the Sign Ordinance, Building Codes and other codes, and any other local, state, and federal laws and ordinances.
- P. A licensed general contractor must be utilized for all projects that require any type of construction other than simple exterior painting.
- Q. Applicants delinquent in property taxes are disqualified from applying for the CFG program. All property tax payments must be up to date at the time of submittal. Applicants must submit property tax payment records showing all taxes are current.
- R. Applicants are responsible for obtaining all necessary local and/or state permits.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

- A. Exterior building improvements.
- B. Exterior lighting
- C. New or renovated signs (excluding LED/Scrolling signs)
- D. Parking lot improvements (visible by the public from a public roadway)
- E. Awnings

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F. Exterior paint

G. New construction as an extension of an existing façade, as long as the façade grant funds are used strictly on the exterior facades (must provide proof of expenditures).

H. Permit fees (including building permit fees) associated with the approved façade improvements.

I. Licensed general contractor fees.

The following improvements or services are also eligible if done in conjunction with one of the above stated eligible expenses:

- Decorative fencing
- Landscaping
- Sidewalks on private property.
- Architectural/Design fees up to \$1,500.
- Other site improvements may be approved by the FDC on a case by case basis.

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES AND BUSINESSES

A. The following expenses are not eligible under the CFG program:

- New construction, with the exception of item (G.) listed under ELIGIBLE EXPENSES above.
- Interior renovations
- Project improvements started prior to the receipt of a signed Grant Agreement with the City. Funds spent before grant approval are not eligible for reimbursement.
- Full roof replacements.
- LED and scrolling signs. However, LED signs are allowed on grant award winner's sites, but grant funds cannot be used to pay for LED signs.

B. The following businesses are not eligible under the CFG program:

- Any business not legally allowed by the City of Evansville Zoning Ordinance or not otherwise approved by the Area Plan Commission and/or Board of Zoning Appeals.

C. Any faith-based organizations whose buildings or property are used for religious activities, such as worship, religious instruction, or proselytization.

D. Any site or building that does not meet the criteria of item (B.) under PROGRAM PARTICIPATION CRITERIA above.

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PROGRAM EVALUATION CRITERIA

- A. The level of private investment. The city may give priority to projects in which the applicant is providing more than the required 50% match or for proximity to other developments in the designated areas.
- B. The project's proximity to city-involved catalyst projects, previously awarded façade grant projects, formal streetscape projects, reuse of an historic building, or location in commercial corridors.
- C. Whether the project activates a currently vacant building.
- E. The visual prominence of the building.
- F. The proposed project's ability to aesthetically transform the building, along with the impact the proposed improvements will make to a commercial corridor.
- G. The degree to which the improvements will enhance the originally intended design attributes or historic features of the building.
- H. The long-term durability and sustainability of the improvements (structural improvements vs. less permanent improvements).
- I. The building's level of blight and/or risk of deterioration.
- J. Whether the business creates or enhances "local flavor" in the area.

PROJECT TIMELINE

- A. Applications are received once per year during an open application period (March 15 – April 15 for 2014).
- B. Upon closing of the open application period, projects will be reviewed for compliance with submittal requirements and design guidelines. Incomplete or non-compliant applications may, at the City's discretion, either be rejected or the applicant given a specified period of time to bring the application into compliance.
- C. After notification of preliminary grant award status, preliminary grant awardees will be notified to attend an individual meeting with the Facade Design Committee (FDC). This meeting will determine compliance with the program's Design Guidelines, clarify and further detail the scope of work proposed, create a bid sheet from the detailed scope of work, review the cost estimate information, and prepare the applicant to seek bids for the project. The Design Review process is conducted by the FDC with a goal of reviewing all grant awarded projects by June 1st.
- D. With the scopes of work finalized by July 1st, the applicants must then obtain three (3) project bids. The bids must be presented to the City by the end of June and be reviewed by the City Purchasing Department for compliance.

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- E. Upon receipt of project bids, the City will prepare a formal Grant Agreement that states the exact amount of the grant award, based on the lowest bid. Once the Agreement has been signed by the City and the applicant, the applicant is then free to enter into contracts/agreements with contractors and make purchases related to the façade project. Any contractor agreement entered into, work performed, or materials purchased prior to the signing of the Grant Agreement by both the City and the applicant will not be eligible for reimbursement through the Commercial Façade Grant program. The target date for having all façade Grant Agreements signed is Mid-August.
- Signing the Grant Agreement, by both the City and the applicant, signifies that the grant is officially awarded to the applicant. If a Grant Agreement is not signed by September 1st, then the grant is not approved and preliminary approval will likely be revoked.
- F. All approved façade grant projects must be started within two (2) months of signing the Grant Agreement. Additionally, all required construction/building permits must also be obtained within two (2) months of signing the grant agreement. Permits must be displayed per building code requirements.
- G. All façade grant projects must be completed by the completion date specified in the Grant Agreement.
- H. Upon completion of the façade improvements, the applicant must notify the Grant Administrator that the work is finished and is available for inspection. The City will inspect the work and make a determination as to whether or not the work is satisfactory. The Grant Administrator may seek the assistance of the Facade Design Committee in making a determination on the satisfactory nature of the work.
- I. After the City determines that the façade improvements have been completed in a satisfactory manner, the applicant must request reimbursement for the portion of the work completed by submitting:
- All contractor invoices detailing the work completed. Cancelled checks (front and back) or other proof of payment documents showing that payment has been made for the work performed, and lien waivers signed by all subcontractors.
 - A letter from the applicant stating what project phase has been completed. If the documentation is in order, the Department of Metropolitan Development will have the payment processed by the Finance Department. Invoices and proof of payment documents must be submitted to the Department of Metropolitan Development within 60 days of actual project completion.

APPLICATION PROCESS

- A. A completed application form.
- B. A detailed scope of work, which must include all work proposed in the façade grant project, including the materials to be used. See “Instructions for Developing a Scope of Work and Cost Estimate” for examples.
- C. A cost estimate for proposed work and materials included in the façade grant project. See “Sample: How the project submission should look”.

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- D. Current photographs of the property showing the façades of the building(s) to be improved and/or areas of the sites to be improved.
- E. Clear notations made on photographs of the building, and/or on separate site plans or drawings, illustrating the areas or features of the building that will be improved and also describing the building materials (doors, windows, awnings, etc.).
- F. If landscaping or parking lot improvements are part of the work proposal, then include a landscape plan and/or parking lot plan. The landscape plan must show property boundaries, adjacent roads, building footprints, paved areas, proposed plant names/species, size of plants at time of planting, and placement of each proposed plant on the site. The parking lot plan must show property boundaries, adjacent roads, building footprints, paved areas for parking and circulation, parking spaces (existing and proposed), and other pertinent information. Please refer to the example packet for a good illustration of a properly prepared plan. Modeling an application packet after this example packet will minimize requests for additional information later in the process.
- G. Formal construction drawings, if they have been prepared relating to the proposed improvements.
- H. A written explanation of the project and the improvements proposed, along with a written explanation of the business operation.
- I. Profit and Loss statements for the past two years, for existing businesses.
- J. A business plan, if it is a start-up business, must be approved by the Indiana Small Business Development Center (ISBDC) with a recommendation for approval, including an explanation of the proposed business, brief description of the market competition, and two years of income/loss projections.

SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION

Submittal packets can be mailed or hand-delivered to:

**Commercial Façade Grants Program
Attention Joshua Calhoun
City of Evansville Department of Metropolitan Development
306 Civic Center Complex
1 NW Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Evansville, IN 47708-1869**

If you have questions about this grant program, please contact:

Joshua Calhoun, Community Development Specialist

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